

Message Text

SECRET

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SUBJ: CONCERNS OF THE KING OF THAILAND

1. THE JULY 20 DEADLINE FOR THE U.S. TROOP WITHDRAWAL HAS BEEN MARKED BY A CURIOUS STATE OF TENSION IN BANGKOK WHICH HAS BEEN HEIGHTENED BY ANNOUNCEMENTS IN THE NEWSPAPERS ENJOINING THE POPULATION TO KEEP CALM, BY THE TELEVISION APPEARANCE OF THE PRIME MINISTER, FOREIGN MINISTER AND SUPREME COMMANDER, DEDICATED TO REASSURING AN OTHERWISE CALM CITIZENRY, AND BY ALL KINDS OF MILITARY AND PARA-MILITARY PRECAUTIONS. THIS ATMOSPHERE OF CONCERN MANIFESTED ITSELF IN AN ODD WAY TODAY WHEN I WAS CALLED AT DAYBREAK BY COLONEL PHINIT, A THAI WEST POINTER I HAD KNOWN IN LAOS, WHO SAID THE KING WAS CONCERNED OVER MY SECURITY AND TO LET THE KING KNOW PERSONALLY IF I NEEDED ANYTHING. COL. PHINIT SAID THAT THE KING'S PRIVATE SECRETARY WOULD CALL ME LATER IN THE DAY.

2. MOM LUANG THAWISAN LADAWAN, HIS MAJESTY'S PRIVATE SECRETARY, AND M.R. ADUL KITTIYAKARA, THE QUEEN'S BROTHER, CAME TO THE CHANCERY THIS AFTERNOON. THAWISAN SAID THAT THE KING HAD ASKED HIM TO COME AND EXTEND HIS GOOD WISHES AND TO SAY THAT HE WAS CONCERNED OVER MY SECURITY AND THAT OF THE EMBASSY. I SHOULD FEEL

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FREE TO ASK THE KING FOR ANYTHING I THOUGHT I NEEDED. I

EXPRESSED APPRECIATION AND POLITE SURPRISE.

3. IN THE CONVERSATION WHICH FOLLOWED, I WAS UNABLE TO ELICIT FROM THAWISAN ANY SPECIFIC REASON FOR THE KING'S CONCERN. HE SAID THAT THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE HAD HAD INFORMATION FROM THE MILITARY THAT SOMETHING MIGHT HAPPE AND HAD TAKEN SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS YESTERDAY. (THIS EXPLAINS WHAT APPEARED TO ME TO BE THE EXAGGERATED MEASURES PUT INTO EFFECT BY THE POLICE AT THE CHANCERY AND THE EMBASSY ON THE 20TH.) THAWISAN AGREED THAT THERE WAS A LOT OF TENSION AND SEEMED ENORMOUSLY RELIEVED TO FIND THAT WE WERE NOT AT BATTLE STATIONS. HE SAID THERE WERE REPORTS THAT THE LEFT WOULD CREATE INCIDENTS; ALSO THEIR MAJESTIES WERE WORRIED ABOUT THE RISKS TO THAILAND OF ESTABLISHING RELATIONS WITH HANOI AND WOULD WELCOME MY VIEWS. I SAID THAT I THOUGHT THE RISK OF SUBVERSION WAS NEITHER INCREASED NOR DECREASED BY THE ESTABLISHMENT OF RELATIONS.

3. I TOOK THE BULL BY THE HORNS AND TOLD THAWISAN THAT UNLESS THERE WAS SOME PRECISE INTELLIGENCE OF WHICH I WAS NOT AWARE, I COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY SUPPORTERS OF THE GOVERNMENT AND OF THE KING HAD WORKED THEMSELVES INTO THIS STATE OF ANXIETY. IT SEEMED TO ME THAT THERE WAS NOTHING OF IMMEDIATE CONCERN AND THAT APPEALS FOR CALM AND TV APPEARANCES BY GOVERNMENT LEADERS CREATED AN ATMOSPHERE OF CRISIS WHEN THAILAND SHOULD TRY TO RADIATE CONFIDENCE AND CALM. IT WAS HARD TO BELIEVE THAT A HANDFUL OF LEFTWING STUDENTS AND A NON-ISSUE LIKE THE U.S. WITHDRAWAL WARRANTED ALL KINDS OF RED GAUR/VILLAGE SCOUT/TROOPS ON STANDBY/ POLICE ON FULL ALERT/ETC. TREATMENT.

4. THAWISAN SAID THAT THAILAND FACED MANY PROBLEMS. THE LONG FRONTIER WITH LAOS OPENED THAILAND TO ALL KINDS OF INFILTRATION. VIETNAM WAS AGGRESSIVE AND HEAVILY ARMED. IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR THE THAI TO REMAIN WARY. I EXPLAINED TO THAWISAN THE REASONS FOR WHICH I DOUBTED THAT THE VIETNAMESE PANZERS WERE GOING TO PLUNGE INTO THAILAND AND RETURNED TO THE THEME THAT A BOUYANT, PROSPEROUS AND CONFIDENT THAILAND SHOULD NOT FEAR INFILTRATION FROM AN IMPOVERISHED AND BACKWARD STATE LIKE LAOS. I WENT ON TO SAY THAT COMMUNIST AGRICULTURE POLICIES WERE UNLIKELY TO SUCCEED AND THAT I DID NOT VIEW THE SITUATION AS STARKLY AS THAWISAN, PROVIDED THE THAI GOVERNMENT INSTITUTED THE NECESSARY REFORMS AND PROGRAMS.

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5. THAWISAN, WHO LOOKED TIRED AND DRAWN, WAS CLEARLY IMMENSELY RELIEVED BY OUR LACK OF ANXIETY OVER THE EXISTING SITUATION. I AM CONVINCED THAT THE PALACE HAS WORKED ITSELF INTO A STATE OF NERVES AND HOPE THAT THAWISAN'S VERSION OF OUR CONVERSATION WILL BRING SOME PERSPECTIVE INTO THE PALACE GROUP, WHICH BY ITS RECENT ACTIONS HAS TENDED TO POLARIZE PUBLIC OPINION RATHER THAN

INSPIRING THE CONFIDENCE WITHOUT WHICH CONDITIONS IN THAILAND
CAN ONLY GET RAPIDLY WORSE.
WHITEHOUSE

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NNN

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